DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 066 556 VT 015 686

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TITLE The Need for Career Education.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 18p.; Presentation at the Invitational Workshop on Career Education (Washington, D. C., March 1, 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; *Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; *Educational Philosophy; Educational Problems; *Relevance (Education); Speeches; Student Needs

ABSTRACT

Despite efforts to make education more relevant, the record is still not very encouraging either in terms of human resources or financial investment. Examples of the poor record are: (1) There is increasing segregation between students and the world of work based on the idea that a technological society has no room for individuals, (2) One-third of all high school students enroll in a general education curriculum which leaves them unprepared for either a job or college, (3) Vocational education is still viewed by many as low status education, (4) The value of a college degree is overrated, (5) The present educational system is inflexible in that students are often caught up in premature tracking, and (6) Many students have little or no formal contact with, or preparation for, the world of work during their elementary and secondary years. Career education can help remedy the above situation through career awareness in the early grades and career preparation in the upper grades. Also, it should be noted that career education is for persons of all ages and of all ethnic groups. (JS)

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THE NEED FOR CAREER EDUCATION*

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* Keynote Address at the Invitational Workshop on Career Education on March 1, 1972 Washington, D. C. --Participating States: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia

VT015686

Keynote (Banquet) Speech
for Career Education Workshops

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THE NEED FOR CAREER EDUCATION

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This audience represents an impressive cross-section of the nation's top leadership - in education, business and industry, commerce, labor, community organizations, and equal opportunity. Each of you is a recognized leader in your field. That's why you were invited to participate in this conference, why education needs your special insights, your breadth of experience, your understanding of the problems that confront both education and the larger society, and your proposals to get at some of these problems.

Because you are who you are, you encourage me to begin this discussion of the need for career education by asking how you got where you are.

Think back for a moment to those early formative years. Did you have a plan -- did your high school help you develop

a plan -- for the appropriate career preparation and the subsequent job placement that would enable you to enter and advance in the field of your choice? Only you know how much of that route was planned, how much was due to motivation, perseverance, and hard work, how much was the right decision at the right time, and how much was simple good fortune.

The point is, there, ought to be a better way! And that way ought to be planned and available to all.

I'm sure we agree that much of what is wrong in our society -- and I don't discount all the things that are right in this society -- has to do with the people who did not get adequate career guidance and training early enough and substantially enough to find their way into productive and rewarding fields of endeavor.

Despite our concerted efforts in recent years to make education more relevant for the children and young people in our schools and colleges, our area vocational and technical schools and technical institutes, the record is still not very encouraging either in terms of human resources or financial investment.

For example:

First, there is increasing segregation between students and the world of work because they feel they are unneeded by our technological society. They argue that since fewer and fewer "bodies" are needed to produce more and more consumption goods, they (the students) are shipped off to the educational institutions for temporary internment.

Second, about one-third of all students pass through high school via what is known as the "general education curriculum," a type of education which leaves its graduates neither trained for a salable skill nor qualified to pursue higher education.

Third, there is an undesirable and counter-productive separation of the vocational education, general education, and academic curricula in our high schools, with the result that those in the vocational curriculum are often seen as low status technicians, while those in the academic curriculum emerge with little contact, preparation toward, or qualification for the world of work.

Fourth, because of the widely held view that a degree is the only kind of respectable occupational preparation in our society, many high school students choose academic preparation. However, a significant number of these do do not go on to college and far more begin college than complete it. In addition, the numbers who do not complete college are increasingly out of proportion to the occupational opportunities in our society. In a free society no system can guarantee an exact matching between individual needs and educational options, nor should a system purport to eliminate those who "drop-out." Nevertheless, the magnitude of these types of discontinuities represents a major problem.

Fifth, the vocational offerings in our high schools and those students who elect them, are sometimes relegated to second class status. As important and relevant as this type of preparation is in modern industrial society, it often has lower status than academic preparation and therefore does not constitute a real option for many students.

Sixth, our present system is an inflexible one which often results in premature tracking, and fails to offer

individuals the option of changing direction during their years of preparation or of obtaining new training and shifting occupations later in life.

Seventh, many students have little or no formal contact with, or preparation for, the world of work during their elementary and secondary years.

In addition let me share with you some statistics compiled by the National Center for Educational Statistics -- For example, in the 1970-71 school year:

-- 850,000 students dropped out of elementary or secondary school. Assume that, on the average, they left at the end of the 10th grade. At $8,000 per child for schooling that began in kindergarten or first grade, these dropouts represented an outlay of $7 billion.

--750,000 graduated from the high school general curriculum that has traditionally been the dumping ground for students who do not elect vocational training or plan to go to college. At $12,000 per student, total cost to the Nation ran about $9 billion.

--850,000 entered college but left without a degree or completion of an occupational program. Assume that,

on the average, they left at the end of the first year. These young people added $12 billion to costs.

If you have been adding with me, you know that we are talking about 2.5 million young people and expenditure of some $28 billion. That is one-third of the entire $85 billion cost of education last year. And these young people and expenditures reflect the dropout rate of a single year. If you try to include the millions of dropouts and billions of dollars spent in years past, the losses become astronomical.

What we can never measure are the personal losses of these young people -- their frustrations, their shattered hopes and dreams. Nor can we calculate the contributions they might have made to our national vitality and progress.

Who are these youngsters? What happens to them? A new Department of Labor study U. S. Manpower in the 1970s not only looks ahead but recaps the labor picture in the 1960s. In terms of our social and economic progress, some lines on the charts and grafts for the 60s moved in the wrong direction or, at best, failed to move at all.

-- Teenage unemployment was more than 12% in every year of the decade.

-- The rate for teenagers of black and other minority races was double that, running between 24% and 30%.

-- Most significantly, the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates widened. At the beginning of the decade, unemployment among the 16-19 age group was 3 times greater than for adults 25 or over. By 1969, over 5 times more teenagers were out of work than adults.

Projections show that 100 million Americans will be working or seeking work by 1980. That's 15 million more people, mostly young, who will have to be accommodated in the labor force by 1980 than we had in 1970. If 2.5 million youngsters are now leaving our schools and colleges each year without adequate preparation, how many of those 15 million are apt to be unprepared for the demands of the 1980 labor market? Compared with 1968, that market will need 50% more professional and technical workers -- but 2% fewer laborers and a whopping 33% fewer farm workers. In parenthesis, let me add that

the Department of Labor sees exactly the same number of openings for teachers in 1980 as 1962, about 40,000 fewer than the peak years of the late 1960s.

It is clear then that Career Education is an idea whose time has come. Until we bring career awareness down into the elementary grades -- until we give youngsters the desire and motiviation to aim for a career that excites them -- until we prepare them to leave high school with a marketable skill or to complete work in a college or technical institute or Area Vocational Technical School with a more advanced skill -- until we key all these activities to the labor market as it will exist when these students are ready to enter it -- until Career Education becomes an integral part of the educational system we will continue to shortchange both our students and our society.

The Career Education concept has acquired some impressive endorsements in recent months.

President Nixon called for a new emphasis on Career Education in his State of the Union message to Congress in January, saying that: 'There is no more

disconcerting waste than the waste of human potential. And there is no better investment than an investment in human fulfillment. Career Education can help make education and training more meaningful for the student, more rewarding for the teacher, more available to the adult, more relevant for the disadvantaged and more productive for our country."

National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education was one of first groups to formally endorse the concept of Career Education and pledged their support. Vocational Education is an important part of Career Education. The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education passed a resolution this week commending the Administration for its efforts in Career Education.

And in an official White House proclamation for Vocational Education Week, February 13-19, 1972, the President also stated that: "Owing much to the efforts of vocational educators, we are now on the threshold of a new concept of education which can make school both more interesting to the student and more relevant to him and his society. This concept, Career Eduction,

is based on the principle that a complete and meaningful education should include the opportunity to learn about the world of work.

The vocational educator can take satisfaction from the fact that the new concept of Career Education derives its heart and energy from the efforts so carefully begun by the vocational and technical teachers of America."

Commissioner Marland and many of us on his staff at the Office of Education have worked for several months in closest cooperation with the Chief State School Officers, university-based research centers, representative school districts, and professional education associations to try to develop a first approximation of what Career Education could, not necessarily should be.

The Chief State School Officers support the basic concept without reservation. They have pledged a major effort to gain legislative and public endorsement in their own States and to use the resources available to them to encourage the adoption of Career Education elements in their local school districts. State legislatures, notably Florida, Arizona, and New Jersey, are making the ultimate commitment -- putting money where their endorsement is.

The groundswell of interest prompted Commissioner Marland early this year to appoint an Office of Education Task Force, headed by Executive Deputy Commissioner Peter Muirhead, to direct the growing Federal involvement both in the basic research and development aspects and in the support of pilot programs in selected school systems. You will hear about these developments in detail tomorrow.

While I know that your deliberations at this workshop, and those in workshops we hope you will sponsor in your own States and communities, will generate new ideas and suggest new directions, there are certain basic elements to the Career Education concept that I would like to clarify here.

-- Career Education is not a high-sounding new name for what we have always called vocational education.

-- Career Education is for every child: rich, poor, suburban, urban, rural; beginning in his first school year and following him as far as he goes in the education system.

-- Career Education is a way to provide career awareness in the early grades and career preparation in the upper grades that continues at an ever-increasing level of

sophistication until every student is equipped to enter the occupation of his choice -- limited only by his personal ability.

-- Career Education must include Vocational Education because we estimate at least 80% of our school youth should develop salable skills while in school.

-- Career Education is not only for children and young adults. It is also for persons of all ages for anyone who wants to enhance his occupational and earning potential. Two of the four Research and Development models for Career Education developed by the Office of Education are pointed specifically toward adults.

-- Career Education favors no ethnic group to the exclusion of any other. It simply recognizes that concentration and motivation need to be ignited early in life -- rekindled later -- so that every individual can pursue the occupation and life style of his or her choice.

-- Career Education is not a rigid program from which no State or school district or adult training effort can deviate. Every State, every community, has a population, an occupation market and an educational system that differs in some degree from every other. Career Education is flexible and can be molded to the unique needs of every State and community.

-- Career Education is not a restructuring of education that will bankrupt our citizenry. True, startup costs in schools should be somewhat higher than present per-pupil costs. These costs would include the addition of many more guidance counselors and the retraining of those we have to bring career orientation down to the elementary grades and to pay for higher cost of the skill development training equipment needed for secondary and postsecondary level.

I should like to emphasize particularly the need for redirecting guidance and counseling, at all levels, as we develop this concept of Career Education because in order for an individual to choose a career he must first know how to make occupational decisions based upon the knowledge and understanding of occupational opportunities.

"A full 12 years ago the famed educator, Dr. James B. Conant, recommended in 'The American High School Today" that our high schools have one vocational counselor for every 250 to 300 students. . . .

We also urgently need in our high schools far more emphasis on group counseling to make the best possible use of the

limited personnel, far more emphasis on counseling those not college-bound and on educating girls and minority members to the full range of opportunities ahead of them if they have the right education-training."*

Before educators can move effectively, however, we Americans need to re-examine -- as parents, taxpayer, legislators, and business men -- some of the "self-evident truths" that have long governed our thinking and our pocketbooks regarding the relationship between education and the whole business of job training and career advancement. Indeed, the consensus already building suggests that many of these "truths" have outlived their time and that some were never really self-evident in the first place. Let's look at some of them.

First, "give students a thorough academic grounding and careers will take care of themselves. 'The public record is replete with evidence that this is not true today'. Careers do not just happen; they must be planned. Occupational choice, and specific skills training, must be part of the total Career plan of each individual.

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* Sylvia Porter, Your Money's Worth, "Career Counseling Lagging," Washington Evening Star, October 7, 1971.

Second, dropouts are low achievers who are not going to make it in a technological society anyway.

Not so. Dropout rates have little to do with ability. For example, Louisville, Kentucky had 1,900 of its 15,000 secondary students dropout in a single year. Looking for reasons, the school system found that only 4 percent quit because they had to go to work; 6 percent could not make it academically; over 50 percent left due to lack of interest.

Third, the study of Grammar, English Literature, Geometry, have no Career relevance for today's students. Those of you in business, industry and labor can help tremendously by going into classrooms and telling students how your own studies of these subjects contributed to your career decisions and advancement. This does not mean that schooling should not include the learning it does at present. It does not mean that education's main aim should no longer be developing the student's ability to think and to reason. It does mean that a student should have the chance to learn about the world of work and what he can do in it and how he can prepare for it. He must have the opportunity to make that specific preparation.

Fourth, you need a Bachelor's degree to perform entry level professional and managerial tasks.

Although many business firms seem to believe this, as evidenced by their hiring practices, it is increasingly obvious that this policy is counter productive.

We frustrate many young college graduates by hiring them to handle largely routine assignments. And we lose many good people who are barred from a chance to demonstrate their abilities because they do not have a college diploma. Remeber that such creative geniuses as Thomas Edison had only three months of formal schooling in a life-time and that David Sarnoff, who pioneered RCA's telecommunications breakthroughs, dropped out of school at age 15. Unless Business takes a hard look at its credentialing requirements, another Edison or Sarnoff may never be given a chance. Parents, Civic leaders, Legislators, and other decision-makers take their cue from business and support the degree syndrome. We see parents making financial commitments, even sacrifices, in the neighborhood of $10,000 or more to put each child through college -- even those who do not belong there.

We need therefore, to reassess as a society the function of

education in preparing our youth both for productive careers and rewarding lives.

In closing; let me say again how delighted we are to have you here, how appreciative we are of the commitment you make personally and on behalf of your organization in participating in this workshop. I hope you will return to your States, your communities, and associations with a like commitment to career education programs that will help every youngster find his place in the world of work.

Chances are, every generation produces only one Hemingway and one Lindbergh, one Edison and one Sarnoff, and they will probably make it despite the odds. If there is any single goal inherent in the Career Education Concept, it is to expand the minority who made it in our generation to encompass the great majority of young people in the next. That goal requires the dedicated involement of us all. The idea that no man is an island, that we all can use a helping hand, is an idea that has been around for centuries. But I think George Bernard Shaw may have said it best:

> Independence he said, that's middle class Blasphemy. We are all dependent on one another, -every soul of us on earth.

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